



# City of Atka

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March 13, 2003

State DCED  
Local Boundary Commission  
550 7<sup>TH</sup>  
Anchorage, Alaska 95501

RE: Aleutians West Borough

The Atka City Council did not provide any comments or opinions concerning the model borough study for the Aleutians West because written report was not received in Atka until February 14<sup>th</sup>, after the public hearings on February 9<sup>th</sup>. There is no local internet access in Atka and the one that is available is a long distance call that times out when downloading long documents. I did provide a few corrections to the information contained in the report but did not provide any comments from the City Council since they had not had an opportunity to review the study. The City Council did meet on February 26<sup>th</sup> and the borough study was discussed..

***The Atka City Council opposes borough formation in the Aleutians West for the following reasons:***

- 1: The majority of the population is based in Unalaska. Five to six seats on the borough assembly and school board would most likely be held by Unalaskans. The majority of residents in Unalaska are non-Native with many coming from other places outside Alaska. They may not be familiar with or interested in learning about what it is like for people living in a remote, rural village such as Atka. It is feared that it will be difficult for the needs and desires of smaller communities, such as Atka, to be heard and met through a borough. A borough in the Aleutians West could set up a mini regional version of the "urban" vs. "rural" divide since most of the population is in Unalaska and the people there will believe they are entitled to most of the attention and resources.
2. A borough could impose new taxes on Atka residents. Unalaska residents already pay a number of local taxes; Atkans do not pay local taxes other than raw fish sales tax levied on the fish processed in the shore based plant. According to the US Census, Atka has a median household income of \$30,938 per year. The Unalaska median household income is more

than two times that at \$69,539. Atka residents already pay extremely high costs for transportation, heating fuel, electricity, gasoline, and food. Taxes in the form of sales tax or property tax will create additional financial burdens for local residents. Atka residents work seasonally fishing locally for halibut and black cod. There are few year-round jobs available. Families have a hard time meeting expenses as it is without having to pay additional taxes.

3. There may not be enough of a tax base in Atka to provide enough support to make taxation worthwhile. The tax base is in Unalaska not Atka. Why would Unalaska residents want to pay taxes to carry the burden of Atka.
4. It is understood that the purpose of the study was to identify which unincorporated regions meet the standards for borough formation. However, the information provided in the study raised more questions than it provided answers.

We hope you will consider our comments even though they are being submitted late.

Signed,

CITY OF ATKA ,



Julie Dirks  
City Administrator

Cc: Representative Carl Moses  
Senator Lyman Hoffman  
Atka City Council